

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the above-captioned patent application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS**

1. (Canceled).
2. (Canceled).
3. (Canceled).
4. (Canceled).
5. (Canceled).
6. (Canceled).
7. (Canceled).
8. (Canceled).

9. (Currently Amended) A method for performing an optical read of dead volume of fluid in a metering tip, said tip containing a volume of aspirated fluid, a portion of said fluid being dispensed as samples, said tip comprising at least one stepped area within an interior of said tip, said at least one stepped area including a sharp diametrical edge, said method including the steps of:

i) attaching a metering tip to a metering apparatus;

ii) aspirating a volume of fluid into said metering tip using said metering apparatus, said tip comprising at least one stepped area within the interior of the metering tip, each said at least one stepped area including a sharp diametrical edge at the junction of the surface of an interior region and surface of the stepped area, said surfaces being substantially orthogonal;

iii) dispensing a portion, but not the entirety, of samples from the volume of aspirated fluid from said metering tip through said a lower tip opening wherein said dispensed portion of fluid is moved over the sharp diametrical edge of said at least one stepped area so as to latch a lower meniscus of the fluid passing said at least one stepped area and thereby reducing oscillation of the fluid in the metering tip;

iv ii) aspirating an air bubble into said tip, thereby drawing the remaining fluid retained in said metering tip upwardly and into a an-axial cylindrical section of said metering tip, said axial cylindrical portion being defined with a substantially constant planar internal diameter defining a read window wherein ~~one of~~ said at least one stepped areas area is located above said read window, wherein said stepped area ~~above said read window~~ flattens the upper meniscus of said retained volume of fluid; and

iii) sealing the lower tip opening of said metering tip; and

\* iv) optically reading the retained volume through said defined read window.

10. (Canceled).
11. (Canceled).
12. (Canceled).
13. (Canceled).
14. (Canceled).
15. (Canceled).
16. (Canceled).
17. (Canceled).